

SONNETS & QUATRAINS

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATTERSON

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SONNETS & QUATRAINS

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BY

ANTOINETTE DE COURSEY PATERSON
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TO
T. H. H. P.

I gratefully acknowledge the courtesy of the Editors of the publications named below who have permitted me to reprint the following poems:—Humoresque, *Scribner's Magazine*; To Joy, To Sorrow, *The Academy (London)*; To an Optimist, Water-Lilies, *Out West*; To a Bird, *Lippincott's Magazine*; The Dreamer, *Uncle Remus's Home Magazine*; White Magic, *Ainslee's Magazine*; To ——, *The Thrush*; To a Migrant Bird, *The Youth's Companion*; and The Difference, *The Cavalier*.

A. DE C. P.



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SONNETS & QUATRAINS

HUMORESQUE

TWO roses, red and white, grew side by side.
Love kissed them—from the one the colour died;
The other flamed into a scarlet hue:—
Together, white and red, two roses grew.

TO SORROW

SORROW, O Sorrow, thou hast lain so long
Close to my soul that still its listening ear,
Attuned to mournful music, waits thy song.
Off in the dim grey distance, faint yet clear,
It rises,—though this little alien thing
Called Joy, which crept of late into my arms,
Tries bravely with each rose-wreathed offering
To dissipate thy melancholy charms.—
But, Sorrow, thou hast trained me in thy ways
So long I cannot follow a new road;—
These eyes thou hast accustomed to grey days,
This back to stooping from its constant load.

Nay, Joy, I cannot lay my hand in thine,—
Too swift thy dance for these slow steps of mine.

TO JOY

ALTHOUGH your spirit sparkles like the wine
Celestial, you are earth-born, Joy, by choice,
And your ideals only half divine.
For with the guileless eyes and silver voice
You have the tricks of fairies, and a tongue
That works for mischief when it finds the chance.
You whisper to a boy, since he is young,
Of what avail is time or circumstance!—
You give a merry twist to solemn things,
Making of life and love one holiday:
And for the dance you lend our feet your wings
That they may not grow weary in the play.

You're just a little worldling, Joy, it seems,
But who like you can give such happy dreams!

TO AN OPTIMIST

THY life like some fair sunset ever seems;—
Each dull grey cloud thy subtle alchemy
Transmutes into a jewel, whose bright beams
Gladden the eyes of all who look on thee.

TO A BIRD

I FOUND you fallen from your nest one day,
With little frightened eyes and wounded wing;
I healed the hurt and coaxed the fear away,
And then you bravely tried to chirp and sing.
I bought a cage to keep you for a pet :
So little of the woodland you had known
I felt assured you would in time forget,
And be content to stay with me alone.
But when the summer came, a longing grew
To fly far, far,—you even told me so
In your mute way, with eyes fixed on the blue.—
I understood the wish, and let you go.

Ah, little Bird, life's cage still holds me fast,
But a kind hand will free me, too, at last!

THE DREAMER

A DREAMER ever in the vale of dreams,
Poor was he called, so poor, and wholly mad:—
They judged him by the garment's rusty seams
With which the bent and shrunken frame was clad.
And every evening as the sun sank low,
Outside the busy town where earth met sky,
Near where a stream meandered soft and slow
That same strange form would wander slowly by.

And ah, the music heard by those keen ears,—
The wondrous pictures seen by those deep eyes!—
A pauper?—No.—Save not for him your tears.
The clouds and streams to him their gifts devise,
And he is heir each night to wealth untold,—
The dying sun bequeaths him all his gold.

WHITE MAGIC

A MILK-WHITE opal lay within my palm,
Within my breast a heart lay, cool and calm;—
A sunbeam, and the stone was shot with flame,
While the dull heart enkindled at a name.

TO —

I LOVE you as few women have loved men;—
This I believe, and so it's true to me:—
And you?—you give me of my own again,—
No more I ask for all eternity.
But should you ever take your heart from mine,
I shall not tell you, Dear, this love would die,
Lest you might think a tiny spark divine
Surviving would the embers vivify.
A hopeless folding of the hands instead,
No cry, no blessed weeping to control,
Silence most absolute, than death more dead,—
A void—an utter loneliness of soul.

O God, from such a fate in mute appealing,
Behold me humbly at Thy footstool kneeling!

TO A MIGRANT BIRD

HOW bravely dost thou wing thy flight, O Bird,
Over the desert and the lonely sea!—
What is the distant call that thou hast heard
Which with a faith sublime inspirereth thee?
Not for a moment dost thou seem to pause
Or wonder why the word to thee has come;
Not for a moment askest thou the cause,—
Thine eyes look forward and thy voice is dumb.

Would that my soul, O God, in Thy great might
Like that frail bird could put such perfect trust;
So when the time shall come for its long flight
Into the worlds unknown, as gladly must
Its wings spread forth in the same confidence,
Knowing it is Thy voice that calls it hence.

THE DIFFERENCE

LIKE the victims of a fate unkind,
A One cursed his God and then succumbed to wrong;
One turned to heaven his eyes with grief half blind
And from his sorrows made a deathless song.

LOVE'S LIMITATIONS

WHO would deny thee miracles, O Love?—
It is thy magic that awakes the soul
To ecstasy, lifting it high above
Earth's sorrow; or, in briefest space, the whole
Of human woe reveals. What crimes, what deeds
Heroic, have been done at just thy word!
For thou dost so outrival colder creeds
That all hearts follow where thy voice is heard.

We grant thee, Love, this power to curse or bless:
But duty from thy thrall can still free men,
And never has thine utmost tenderness
Made cripples walk, nor blind eyes see again.
The light grows dim with which thy feet are shod,
When thou wouldst claim supremacy with God.

TO A VASE OF SYRIAN GLASS

THOUGH delicate and fragile as some flower
Of that far Syrian land from whence you came,
Your beauty still remains a priceless dower,
O little Eastern Vase with soul of flame!
Old as the years go, yet forever young,
The wayward spirit in you laughs and plays
Now here, now there, with dartling lights, among
The markings and the crusts of ancient days.
Inebriate with colour do you seem,
As though the nectar once poured forth for you
Was brewed from crimson of the clouds which gleam
In evening skies; and from the ocean's blue
Shading to green and purple, with a glow
Like amber shining from the depths below.

WATER-LILIES

THE lake was all alive and glistering
With water-lilies. To my questioning
From whence they came, thus spake a lily white:
“We are the stars the lake lured down last night.”

IN SPRING

ON this most perfect morning of the spring,
Tell me, my heart, where Love's dear feet shall stray,
That I may haste to meet him on the way,
With joyful looks, and with an offering
That shall seem fitting for my lord and king.
If I shall find him where the waters play
About the mighty rocks, their rainbow spray
He'll think less lovely than these dreams I bring:
And if I meet him in the meadows where
Are yellow cowslips gleaming in the sun,
I know that he will say, her golden hair
Outshines them in its glory, every one,—
And on her cheeks my roses bloom so fair
That those upon the hedgerows are outdone!

TO THE MINOR POETS

THE sky would be less lovely if swept clear
Of star-drift, and each planet, moon, and sun
Enmeshed therein no fairer would appear
Without the web those starry motes have spun.
The lesser beauties claim likewise their debt;—
Who loves the ocean best will miss the stream;
Hills would seem bare without the small bluet,
Although the rose's reign is all supreme.
And so, ye Poets of the minor lays,
Sing on and charm us with your harmony:—
Those who the nightingale's pure music praise
Can yet enjoy a thrush's melody.
They look for no wide range, but ask of you,
Those notes in middle octaves shall ring true.

TO MARIE STUART

ALWAYS I think of you in sunny France,
Where you were both the queen and happy child:—
Too sad the memory of that cruel chance
Which grafted you, a rose, on thistles wild!

CHILDREN ELECT

IT needeth but a flower's touch to thrill
Some souls to an exquisite sense of things.
A shining path at just a rose's will
Opens before them, its meanderings
To their awakened fancy now revealed.
Perchance there comes a star to guide them through,
Or thrush's note like silver fount unsealed,
Or else across their steps from out the blue
A sunbeam darts to show the fairest way.
Ever that fancy finds some height to climb
Where all around is darkness and decay.
Children Elect they are, and for all time:
A rose, a star, a shell that holds the sea,
Unlocks for them sublimest mystery.

YOU SHOULD NOT WONDER, DEAR

YOU should not wonder, Dear, my lips are mute:
To learn a strange new language must take time.
When first these fingers played upon Love's lute,
Neither my soul nor voice were in the rhyme.
And then the tunes were always merry airs!—
Love in the guise of rose-wreathed joy and pleasure,—
And all unlike this music which declares
Deep passion throbbing through its simplest measure.
But now the lips that have been dumb so long
Struggle with words that are both brave and new,
Trembling, in all the ecstasy of song,
To feel the theme has been inspired by you.
So, when the words come haltingly and slow,
This sweetest reason for it you will know.

HERO-WORSHIP

THE mortal combat 'twixt our souls was done:
 You were the victor, I the vanquished one.
But never, Darling, were you more adored
Than when you calmly broke in two my sword!

GHOSTS

AND is there nothing that will lay them low,
These baleful ghosts that haunt a tired brain?
Backward and forward, with the ebb and flow
Of memories that gather in their train,
Straight to the very soul of things they glide:—
So tenuous they are, so light their tread,
That they can slip into a dream and hide
Without so much as snapping its fine thread.
They tell me Love has power more potent still;
His eyes are of the brightness of the day,
And those on whom they rest shall fear no ill,—
Their glory keeps all evil things away.

O Love, I pray thee for thy gracious aid
When the ghosts walk, and hearts are sore afraid!

THE WEB

IF it were my sweet fate to spin for her
Life's web from its beginning to its close,
I would take pattern from the gossamer
I saw this morning stretched across a rose.
And as the rose's colours intervene
There where the spider spins the web most dense,
Through all life's shadows flowers would be seen,
Revealing still their gentle influence.
And tears I'd weave so they might catch the sun
And be transformed to jewels rare and fine,
Just as a cloud her fairy work has done,
In sprinkling on the web raindrops that shine
With all the wealth of heaven's lovely blue,
Shading from pale to deepest sapphire hue.

ILLUSION

I THOUGHT some fairies dancing I had found,
All gowned in white, with slippers made of glass:
But they were snowdrops hiding in the grass,
While little hailstones twinkled on the ground!

VENICE

I DRINK in with the soft Venetian air
The mystery and silence of the years;
The lapping of the water breathes of tears,
Of all-pervading sadness and despair.
An alien art thou, Venice, strange and fair:
Bound to the past with all its hopes and fears,
An ancient love and hate my spirit hears
Vibrating through thy songs and music rare.

And now there sounds the gondolier's weird cry;
My boat slips round the corners dark and grim
Of some old palace, and the ghosts flit by,
Stepping so lightly from those chambers dim:—
Pale lovely ghosts, whose hair of ruddy gold
Shines through the gloom untarnished as of old.

TO A SUMMER DAY

HOW much I owe thee, bonny summer Day,
And all thy bird-songs and thy glinting streams
And perfume sweet of flowers!—Ah, the dreams
Thou waftest to me on thy zephyrs gay,
While tricks among the leaves thy sunbeams play!
Like unto fairyland my whole world seems
With that blue sky, and clouds whose whiteness gleams
More fair than silver in the sun's bright ray.
Wilt thou, too, die an early death, no less
Than other lovely things that God has made
And given me to comfort and to bless?—
Nay, bonny summer Day, be not afraid;
My soul, absorbing all thy loveliness,
Makes thee immortal;—thus my debt is paid.

ABSOLUTION

A TURBID soul and stranger to no crime,
He paused beside a pool all foul with slime:—
“My prototype,” he grimly said when lo—
The moon’s white glory on the pond below!

TO PEACE

I THINK of thee as some fair girl in grey,—
Thine eyelids neither closed nor open wide,
And with thy hands hung loosely by thy side,
As though, amid the shades of closing day,
They for a moment rested from the play
Of minor chords that just this moment died.
I saw once, on the lips of a young bride,
That smile which ever with thee seems to stay.
Even the flow'rs look restful thou dost wear;
The purple, sleepy orchids with their leaves
Down-drooped; and the pale slender vine that weaves
Its tendrils softly through thy dusky hair.
Thou seemest of the world, without its care,
Which that great gentleness of thine retrieves.

LOVE QUESTIONED

I ASK you, Love, what you have done to me?
I scarce believed you could thus tightly bind
A human heart so restless and so free
With chains whose links are roses; but I find
You lead me in the paths of your own choice:—
Whether it be through sun or shadow land
Perforce I follow when I hear your voice,
Contented just to feel your guiding hand.
Ah, Love, dear Love, forever hold me fast!—
Once cherished joys seem now such paltry things
They are well-nigh forgotten in that past
Which no sweet mem'ry of your presence brings.

I ask you, Love, what you have done to me,—
Is she a slave who once was glad and free?

THE HUMMING-BIRD

FLASHES of ruby, sapphire, green and gold,
Like flames about a white rose softly play;—
A merging of the colours, and, behold!
A tiny bird that swiftly darts away.

RESPITE

YES, Life, I know you for a sombre thing,
And cruel to the ones who love you best,
But here, within these woods where thrushes sing,
Perhaps the fear of you will sink to rest.
This sunshine doth infect the very blood,
Until thy terror seems a thing apart,
And one's whole nature like a wild-rose bud
Opens to careless joy a willing heart.
Thy grim, grey shapes fade slowly from my sight
While yonder brook laughs in that merry way;
What matters it they will return at night
So I am drugged with beauty for to-day!
Ah, the sweet woodland music, and the dream
Born of the sunshine and a silver stream!

TO THE MOON

O MOON, I pray thee look from Heaven and bless
Thy worshipper here in the vale below,
Who stands enraptured by the loveliness
That with such mystic light doth burn and glow!
There is a mythos old declares thee bride
Unto the sun. Did he choose night for thee
Thinking that thus thy beauty he might hide
Lest other eyes should gaze too ardently?
But lo! thou art a goddess and a queen,
And stars and mortals holdest subjugate.
This world's ambitions fade when thou art seen,
And waiting here, as at a temple's gate,
To be thy priestess I would fain aspire
And tend upon thy altar the white fire.

THE LITTLE SPRING

A GREENER verdure in the forest glade,
A wondrous shining there amid the shade;
A dimpling of the waters, laughter sweet
As fairy music rippling at my feet.

TO SILENCE

HAVE we no sacred spot to offer thee?—
Man's restless thoughts disturb thy spirit mild,
Down loneliest dells the winds sob mournfully,
The sea at best is restless as a child.
Sweet Silence! thou belongest not to earth
With all its din and garish light of day,
Amongst the silver stars thou hadst thy birth
Which noiselessly pursue their onward way.
Yet here thou bidest sometimes as the friend
Of Love and Death;—I felt thee very near
When Love unto my heart the word did send
That in the sight of one I was held dear.
And thy wings fold above a new grave's sod,
That o'er thy hush may rise the voice of God.

THE LITTLE LOVE-SONG

I 'M just a little Love-Song, that is all;
And yet when some one sings me worthily
The tears well up in alien eyes and fall,
While hearts beat fast,—and all because of me.
I am a little ghost, and haunt the brain
Of youth with hope, of age with memories:
The world forgotten is while my refrain
Transports them to Elysian Fields, and seas
Forever lighted by a lover's moon;
Where all the air breathes rose and eglantine,
And music offers me her sweetest boon
To lend enchantment to these words of mine.

I 'm just a little Love-Song, simple, sweet,
But lo! the proudest hearts are at my feet.

MOUNT EVEREST

THE heavens save for thee their whitest snow—
Thee whom the clouds forfend from all earth's pain,
And 'round whose crests unsullied breezes blow;—
Perhaps they know thou 'lt keep it free from stain.

A MEMORY OF NOTRE-DAME

THOUGH far away from those grey walls, how oft
I turn in memory from the noontide glare
To lose myself amid their shadows soft,
And for a space breathe in that quiet air
Which incense sweet and holy thoughts control.
Through the rose-window warm, caressing lights
Again fall gently, soothing my tired soul
Into such peacefulness that troubled nights
Slip from me like the vesture of my dreams.
Then, from a prayer, my soul breaks forth to song,
Which grows in strength and fulness as the gleams
From the rose-window grow more soft and long:
And this the hymn of thankfulness it sings,
What though the feet be chained, it hath its wings!

THE DEATH OF SUMMER

AMID the fading splendour of her bowers
The summer lingers, weary unto death;
From her pale hands slip one by one the flowers,
The stars are misty with her passing breath.
Her faithless birds have in a night departed,—
They cared but for the beauty that is gone,—
Only the streams and rivers, loyal-hearted,
Stay by her side and still sing bravely on.
A requiem the wind is softly sighing,
And where the lightning glimmers in the West
It seemeth like the soul of summer dying,
Which quivers faintly ere it leaves her breast.

Ah, Summer! soon we 'll lay thee with thy roses,—
Where every fair and lovely dream reposes.

ONE KISS

ONE kiss you gave me ere your soul had fled,—
One kiss which through the endless night endures:—
How can I place you with the peaceful dead
The while I thrill to that caress of yours?

TO A GROUP OF PINES

THE frail and blue-veined fingers of the dawn
So lightly touch you that the silver dew
Still sparkles undisturbed. Like roses wan,
Just tinted with the tender sunrise hue,
Her clouds float down to crown your crests, which seem
As soft as feathers blown from fairy-land,
In this mild, gentle light still fraught with dream.
Lusty and strong in the noon's glare you stand,
Cutting so sharp and clean the sapphire sky:
Your tops look now like spear-heads, flung as gage
By mighty giants of the days gone by.
Night comes, and lo! the peacefulness of age
Upon you falls: patient ye are, and still,
Though restless stars play through your leaves at will.

TO WHISTLER AND HIS "TEN O'CLOCK"

TIS thou, great Master, who hast made us see
Above all else the beauty of the night,
Her shadows soft, her subtle harmony
Of blue and green and purple, whence the light
Of garish day has fled. 'T is thy sure touch
Convicts us of the time we waste in dreams
When night spins her long fairy tale, of such
Rare loveliness that it a world redeems.
Each warehouse then becomes a palace fair,
Tall chimneys into campanili turn,
The very city seems to hang in air,
The while its lights like those in heaven burn.

Great Master, night's dear arms do now enfold thee,—
And oh, the secrets new she may have told thee !

TO A VERY OLD LADY

YOUR face is like a white rose, and your curls
Gleam now with silver lights instead of gold:
The years just match your rare old lace and pearls:
You are so lovely since you have grown old!

THE AUTUMN ROSE

A GHOSTLY visitant, pale Autumn Rose,
Haunting my garden that you once loved well:
Ah, how you queened it ere the sweet June's close,
And blushed anew to hear the zephyrs tell
Your loveliness was fairer than a dream!
But now your pride of beauty is all gone,
And like some poor sad penitent you seem,
Whose drooping head but hides a visage wan
And wasted by the coldness of the world.
Upon your faint sweet breath is borne a sigh,
Within your petals lies a tear impearled;
I hear you to my garden say good-bye.

A sudden wind—the pale rose-petals blow
Hither and yon—or are they flakes of snow?

A DREAM

I DREAMED a dream of roses somewhere breathing
Their sweet souls out upon the summer night:
The flowers I saw not, but their fragrance wreathing
Like clouds of incense filled me with delight.
And then as if for my still further pleasure
There came a flood of sweetest melody,—
But whence I knew not flowed the wondrous measure,
For neither flute nor viol could I see.
Then in the vision love sublime, immortal,
Encircled all my soul with its pure stream;
And though I saw thee not through dreamland's portal,
I knew thou only hadst inspired the dream.
'T is thus thine influence itself discloses,
In dreams of love, of music, and of roses!

EPHEMERA

O TINY creatures with the shining wings,
Rejoice your life endures but for an hour!
For thus with you are named the loveliest things,—
The sunset sky, the snowflake, and the flower.

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